

Year in Review

Baseball legend Cal Ripken Jr. visits Stewart

MARCH 2006

Spc. Ben Brody
Frontline staff

Legendary baseball player Cal Ripken Jr. and Olympic gold medal soccer player Abby Wambach visited Fort Stewart to help dedicate a newly-refurbished baseball field March 29.

Wisk Detergent contributed \$10,000 to sod the field and make many other improvements as part of their Win a Dream Field Makeover Contest.

The contest was actually won by Fort Benning for the second year in a row, so Benning officials decided to donate the prize to Stewart.

“We work hard, and we play hard – this refurbishment will ensure that our kids have a top-notch field to play on for years to come,” said Maj. Gen. William G. Webster Jr., former 3rd Infantry Division commanding general.

After the dedication ceremony, Ripken and Wambach spent time playing on the new field with children from Stewart and Benning.

Ripken set up games of quickball, a fast-paced version of baseball with two-minute innings and loose rules. Wambach showed a group of kids some fun exercises to help them develop their soccer skills.

“The major message we’re bringing is to encourage kids to get off the couch and play outside,” Wambach said. “Just to have the sun shine on your face makes a huge difference in all aspects of your life, especially kids.”

Scores of kids showed up to have a chance to get a hit off of Ripken, who is a shoo-in for the Baseball Hall of Fame next year.

“I just thought about making the ball fly,” said Michael McClain, 10, of Fort Stewart, who hit a home run off of one of Ripken’s pitches. “It was easy!”

“This is great — it really gives the kids a sense of pride to have a real field instead of just a sandlot,” said Adrienne McTague, who coaches kids’ t-ball, baseball and softball at Stewart. “It keeps kids healthy, gives them a sense of sportsmanship and develops friendships.”

After the event, Ripken took time out to



Sgt. Ben Brody

Former Orioles third baseman Cal Ripken Jr. receives a Battlekings hat from Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery March 29. Ripken hosted a baseball clinic for Soldiers' children during his visit, as part of a dedication ceremony for the newly-refurbished Field 17.

visit with 3rd Infantry Division Soldiers who were wounded during Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

Ripken autographed baseballs and mili-

tary mementos for the Soldiers and spoke to them about their service and recuperation from their injuries.

“I’m truly honored to be in the presence

of so many great Soldiers,” Ripken said. “Keep your mind focused, and continue to give 110 percent, and you’ll recover stronger.”

APRIL 2006 3rd Inf. Div. Soldier throws ceremonial first pitch

Pfc. Jennifer Fulk
10th PAOC

The first pitcher on the mound at Turner Field for the Atlanta Braves game April 14 was not a member of their team; in fact, the pitcher was not a baseball player at all.

He was one of America’s many heroes who fought for this country in Iraq, but came home with more to show for it than most.

Spc. Daniel Tompkins — a Bronze Star recipient, standing at only 5 feet 5 inches and wearing a boyish grin and his desert combat uniform — looked comfortable as he threw his already-autographed baseball into the catcher’s waiting

mitt.

The armored crewman with Company C, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, was chosen to throw the first pitch at the Atlanta Braves game after earning a Bronze Star with Valor for his heroic efforts during Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

Tompkins was chosen from a list of five people, said Sgt. 1st Class Rony Michel, Tompkins’ platoon sergeant.

During a fire fight in Iraq, while he was only a private, Tompkins saved 13 members of his platoon from a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.

“I engaged a VBIED that was

coming at our platoon. I shot the driver of the vehicle before it got to us; detonating it early. There were no real (U.S.) injuries, just some shrapnel,” he said.

Despite his bravery, Tompkins remains humble about the events that took place that day.

“The way I look at it is if anyone in my platoon was standing where I was at that moment they would be getting interviewed right now; I didn’t do anything that I wasn’t trained to do,” he said.

His leaders feel differently.

The write-up for Tompkins’ award reads, “Tompkins’ selfless act of valor saved the lives of 13 of his platoon members. He stood his

ground, did not seek cover, and kept firing until the blast knocked him (down),” are the words written by Tompkins’ company commander Capt. Foy S. Walden.

He was pinned with his Bronze Star at Camp Victory in Baghdad by Gen. Peter Schoomaker, chief of staff of the Army, who also gave him a coin, a coveted token of appreciation in the military usually given by high-ranking officials.

However, while the attention is welcome, Tompkins is not letting his new-found fame go to his head.

Earning this award and being chosen to throw the first pitch at the game has given Tompkins a busy schedule. “Now everyone

knows who I am, but I still do the same thing every day; I still go to the motor pool and get dirty,” he said with a smile.

“This whole thing keeps me going in a straight line; it’s good motivation,” he said.

Tompkins, an New York native, joined the Army because he needed a change.

“I thought that the Army would give me opportunities; I didn’t like where my life was going. I was also influenced by the events of Sept. 11,” he said.

He graduated from basic training Sept. 12, 2003 and found out that his unit would be going to Iraq the following year.

“I didn’t believe it at first; I had mixed emotions. At first I was nervous, then excited, afraid and finally mad for awhile,” he said.

But his apprehension quickly diminished when he got to know the people he would be going to the desert with.

“When I got to the unit, I saw that everyone was squared away and I knew that as long as we did what we needed to do we would be okay,” he said.

Today, Tompkins is doing more than just okay. Back home with his wife and two girls; Bridget, 4, and Kara, 5; Tompkins plans to reenlist in the Army.

“I plan on being a Sergeant with-in the next seven months; I just keep pushing myself.”

His wife of two years, Nelanie Tompkins said she always knew he was capable of something like this.

“It will be harder for me to let him leave again on another deployment knowing what happened on this one,” she added.

“Tompkins is a hard-working Soldier. He’s young, but he is a real go-getter and always does everything with a smile. He’s just a good Soldier,” Michel said.



Courtesy photo

Spc. Daniel Tompkins, Co. C, 3/7 Infantry, throws out the ceremonial first pitch at an Atlanta Braves game at Turner Field in Atlanta April 14.



Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft

Lug Nut, the Lowe's Motor Speedway mascot, exchanges high-fives with 3rd Inf. Div. Soldiers before they march onto the race track to start off the Bank of America 500 Oct. 14 in Charlotte, N.C.

3rd Inf. Div. Soldiers stand tall at NASCAR race

OCTOBER 2006

Spc. Emily J. Wilsoncroft
Frontline staff

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Amid the whistles and cheers of more than 100,000 NASCAR fans, nearly 500 3rd Infantry Division Soldiers marched onto the track at Lowe's Motor Speedway Oct. 14.

The Soldiers, who traveled from Georgia's Fort Stewart, Hunter Army Airfield and Fort Benning, were invited to represent the Army at the Bank of America 500.

"I think this is great, that NASCAR has given the Soldiers a chance to come down here," said 1st Lt. Michael Fritz, Company D, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment. "We've met a lot of good people here. We met an elderly gentleman (who) showed us through the garages and everything and told us about the cars, what they do. He was an engineer on one of the teams."

The Soldiers arrived at the speedway shortly after noon, and spent the six hours before they were scheduled to appear in front of the packed arena visiting vendors, talking to pit crews, buying souvenirs, and exploring the ins and outs of a professional race track.

"I'd watch (NASCAR) a little bit during deployment, but now I think I'm definitely a fan," Fritz said. "I didn't realize so much went into the actual race."

Pfc. Dana John, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, said she had previously been a fan of dirt-track racing, but that she'd never been to a NASCAR race.

"I think it's special that they invited the Soldiers to come out and get recognized as a unit and everything

... It's a cool experience," she said. "I didn't expect to get down here in the pit with (the crews), so that's something special."

A few of the troops took time to visit with members of the Army's own pit crew.

"The highlight of my day has been talking to (Danny "Mongo" Harrington, the crew's gas man, and Randy Hutchens, the backup gas man), the Army of One guys — the fuelers, the tire-changers — asking about their experience here and how they've come to work for NASCAR," said Staff Sgt. Alejandro Gallardo, Troop C, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. "It's all been a really good experience."

An hour before the race began, the Soldiers stood in formation outside the main track giving high-fives to Lug Nut, the Lowe's mascot, and getting ready to stride ahead before the crowd.

As the command "Forward, MARCH!" boomed forth, the Marne Soldiers marched through the gate and onto the track to wild cheers from the crowd. The Soldiers stayed up front until after the national anthem, which was sung by Kellie Pickler, an "American Idol" finalist.

"I think this is great," said Staff Sgt. Ernest O'Dell, Company B, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment. "It gives us a chance to come out and watch a good race, and it gives the American public a chance to see and express their opinions toward the military, and we get to give something back to the American public."

Gallardo concurred.

"This is a great event," he said. "It's my first NASCAR race, so I'm pretty excited ... It's a good thing for the Army to come down here and represent and show what we're all about."

NOVEMBER 2006

Hitmen win flag football championship during Marne Week

Spc. Ricardo Branch
1st BCT Public Affairs

Less than two minutes into the Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield intramural flag-football championship, the Company A, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion Hitmen scored the first touchdown against the undefeated Company B, 603rd Aviation Support Battalion Killer Bees during Marne Week Nov. 20.

From the first interception to the final touchdown, the championship game was fiercely fought but eventually all games must have a victor and that title belonged to the Hitmen as they went on to a 32-18 win to claim the Stewart/Hunter intramural championship title at Olvey Stadium.

The game began with Hitmen quarterback Tyrone Small throwing a pass to teammate Antonio T. Lewis, who sprinted in for a touchdown for his team.

Following Lewis' performance, Hunter's team brought in a touchdown to tie the game early in the first half.

Another touchdown by Lewis allowed the Hitmen to climb to a lead in the first five minutes of the game.

Killer Bees quarterback, Rodney Hudson gave his team renewed hope as he scored a touchdown run for his team, but it wasn't enough for the Bees to stop the defense of the Hitmen.

Each team fought hard to the bitter end, but Hitmen scored two more touchdowns in the last half, ending the with an outstanding 18-32 victory and earning them the title as Stewart/Hunter champions.

"Most teams like playing speed for flag football but we felt that we could match them with speed. We knew we could have it if we played physical," said Corliss Poole, Hitmen team captain. "Then we worked the clock and kept our biggest asset — our defense on point."

"Really it was our coach Sgt. Fredrick Jones," he said. "Without him, this would never have happened, he stayed up every night calling us to make sure we'd make our games and sacrificed a lot of time for us to win today."



Sgt. Ben Brody

Flag football teams from Co. A, 703rd BSB and Co. B, 603rd ASB battle each other in the installation championship game at Olvey Stadium Nov. 20 during Marne Week.

APRIL 2006

Marne Soldiers tee off with golf legends

Spc. Giancarlo Casem
50th PAD

Four 3rd Infantry Division Soldiers got the opportunity to play with golf greats like Tom Watson, Tom Kite, Fuzzy Zoeller and Chi Chi Rodriguez April 19-20.

The Soldiers and golf legends teamed up for the Professional Golfers' Association's Liberty Mutual Legends of Golf Pro-Am tournament at the Westin Savannah Harbor Resort golf club.

"It's quite the dream come true," said Capt. Michael Murphy, office of the Staff Judge Advocate. "I'm old enough to remember when a lot of these guys were the stars on the PGA tour. My dad and I typically spent our Sundays playing in the morning and watching the PGA tour event on the porch in the afternoon."

The images of Chi Chi Rodriguez's trademark fencing jabs were indomitably etched into his mind.

Golf has been in the Ohio native's system for quite some time now, although it took a back seat when it came to his education.

"I've been playing golf since I was 5 or 6 years old. I played in a lot of junior tournaments around Ohio," he said. "I played in high school but then I kind of got away from it in college and law school."

The tournament was the first time he's actually played with a professional golfer on the tour; however, he has been around them

before.

"I caddied for 12 years at the Canterbury Golf Club in Cleveland, Ohio," he said. "I caddied there during the 1996 U.S. Senior Open and I spent a summer caddying on the (Nationwide Tour)."

Murphy had never played at the Savannah Harbor Club before, but that could be an advantage, he said.

"Playing a course for the first time can be daunting, but also beneficial," Murphy said. "On the one hand, there aren't any demons lurking in your head from errant shots in the past. On the other hand, some home course knowledge is always a plus. For example, when you've played a par three dozens of times, you get a feeling for what club to hit with."

The challenge of the golf course comes not only from its length, as it plays to approximately 7,300 yards from the championship tees, but also from the intellect it takes to navigate its obstacles. Golfers can thank the course's designers; golf legend Sam Snead and world-renowned course architect Bob Cupp. Snead and Cupp, who once served with the Army, teamed together to design The Club at Savannah Harbor to bring to life the eternal golf philosophy of "risk and reward."

A well-executed shot placed close to a hazard provides a substantial benefit in the form of fewer clubs to the green, a better approach angle, or both, said Craig Luckey,

director of golf operations for the Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Club.

The course's longest hole is hole seven, named Big Duke. It is a par five hole and it measures almost 600 yards.

"I don't have a problem with length," Murphy said. "I hit the ball plenty far to reach all holes in regulation and typically, if I hit a good drive, then I have a chance to hit most par fives in two."

The putting surfaces are traditional rather than modern as they have gentle transitions to different pin locations. Some greens feature subtle roll-offs or collars, which fall away. This design feature is reminiscent of the golden era of golf design in the 1930s and 1940s, Sam Snead's heyday, Luckey said.

This year's tournament marked the fourth year that the Liberty Mutual Pro-Am Legends of Golf was held at The Club at Savannah Harbor, said Tim Iley, Liberty Mutual Legends of Golf executive director.

This year there were more than 100 professionals and 200 amateurs who participated in the "play-the-best-ball" tournament. Each team teed off at the same location, and they picked which ball was hit the best and hit from there and worked their way onto the putting green.

Each team was made up of one professional golfer and four amateurs. The top five teams were awarded trophies and the monetary prize.



Spc. Giancarlo Casem
(Inset: courtesy photos)

Capt. Michael Murphy prepares to golf with some of the sport's greatest players during a tournament April 19-20 in Savannah.

Inset, clockwise from top left: Golf legends Chi Chi Rodriguez, Fuzzy Zoeller, Tom Watson and Tom Kite.



Photos by Sgt. Ben Brody

'Dog Face Dukeout' knocks Soldiers off their feet

DECEMBER 2006

Far left: Michael Layne, 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery Regiment, lands a body blow against Javier Albunica, 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, during the Dog Face Dukeout Dec. 13 at Fort Stewart's Newman Physical Fitness Center.

Left: Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, 3rd Inf. Div. commander, congratulates Alvin Blackmon, 2/3 Brigade Troops Battalion, on his win.